

Sport and the Mass Media: Impact and Issues

KIN 251
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Sport and the Media

- ◆ Institutions that are not separate
- ◆ Commercial industries
- ◆ Two of the most lucrative businesses in North America
- ◆ Focused on Economic profit

Media and Power

The media often serve the interests of those with power and wealth in society

As corporate control of media has increased & become more concentrated, media content emphasizes the following as natural and necessary in society:

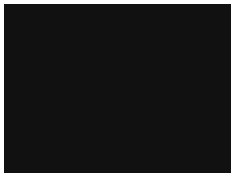
- Consumerism
- Individualism
- Competition
- Class inequality

Global/Corporate Media Influence

- ◆ While there are over 25,000 media outlets - less than 30 companies control approximately 50% of the media industry.
- ◆ Media Giant's Holdings

Exceptionally Sophisticated!

- ◆ Use sophisticated qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to zero in on target demographics...



Social Roles of the Mass Media

- ◆ Mass Media
 - "All of the technically organized means of communication that reach large numbers of diverse people quickly and efficiently" (Eitzen & Sage, 2003, p. 237)
 - ◆ Print Media
 - Newspapers, Magazines, & Books
 - Electronic Media
 - Radio, Television, movies, & the Internet

Prominent & Subtle Roles of the Media

- ◆ **Prominent Roles:**
 - Communication of Information
 - Entertainment for Consumer World
- ◆ **Subtle Roles:**
 - Social Integration
 - ◆ Promotes shared values & norms
 - ◆ Messages and images help to shape the cultural atmosphere
 - Social Change
 - ◆ Present cutting edge research
 - ◆ Report "new ideas" thus promote changes oftentimes

The Symbiosis of Mass Media & Sport

- ◆ 4 Roles of Mass Media are sustained through sport
- ◆ **Information:** results & stats
- ◆ **Entertainment:** "escape reality" temporarily
- ◆ **Social Integration:** creates a 'communal' focus that binds society
- ◆ **Social Change:** create, change, and promote the popularity of certain sports

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- ◆ **Newspapers:**
 - Mid 19th century began periodic coverage of sport
 - By 1890's sports section was a regular feature
 - Today, almost 50% of some papers devoted to sport and the sports pages have 5X the number of readers of any other section

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- ◆ **Magazines**
 - First magazines were focused on "outdoor" activities – hunting, fishing, horse racing.
 - 1830, 1st sport journal: *Spirit of the Times* 1886 – *The Sporting News*
 - Can differentiate based on sport
 - *Sports Illustrated* (1954) 3.5 million copies weekly
 - ½ the space at any newsstand is for sport related magazines

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- ◆ **Books**
 - Many books on boxing, horse racing, & field sports appeared in the late 19th c.
 - Increasingly, "serious" writers began to explore sporting themes
 - Even a journal of Sport Literature!
 - Former athletes and sport journalists making big impact (form kiss-and tell, to expose books)

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- ◆ **Radio**
 - Electronic media of all types have made dramatic inroads into sport
 - KDKA went on the air in 1920 and in 1921 broadcast heavyweight championship fight
 - With TV, radio's dominance subsided in the 1950's
 - Still: 700,000 hours of sports
 - Call-in shows, play-by-play, interviews...
 - Increasing number of "all-sport" radio shows

Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- ◆ Motion Pictures
 - Sport has been a compelling focus for motion pictures since the 1970's
 - ESPN.com - Top 20 Sports Movies of All-Time
 - Some sport movies are moving beyond mere entertainment and exploring larger social issues like race, gender and power

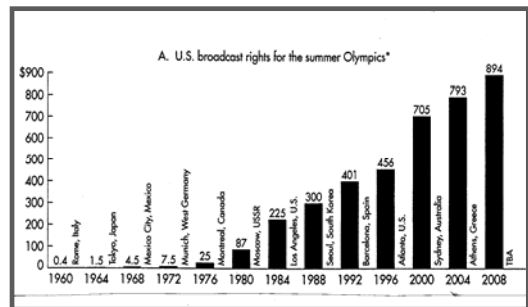
Trends in Televised Sports

- ◆ Rights fees have escalated rapidly since the 1960s
- ◆ Sports programming has increased dramatically
- ◆ As more events are covered, ratings for particular events have decreased
 - Audience fragmentation has occurred
- ◆ Television companies use sports events to promote other programming
- ◆ Television companies increasingly own teams and events

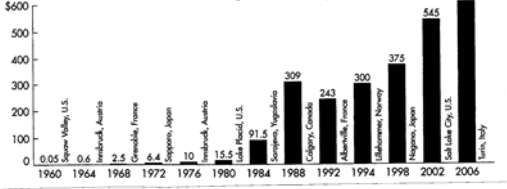
Table 12.1 Escalating annual media rights fees for major commercial sports in the United States (in millions of dollars)^a

Sport	1986	1991	1996	2001
NFL	400	900	1,100	2,200
MLB ^b	183	365	420	420
NBA	30	219	275	660
NHL ^c	22	38	77	120
NASCAR	3	NA	NA	412
NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament	31	143	216	216 ^d

^aThese amounts are not inflation adjusted. Most data come from USA Today.
^bAmounts for baseball do not include local television or radio rights fees negotiated by individual teams or national radio rights fees; amount for 1996 includes national radio rights, and amount for 2001 is an estimate.
^cIncludes U.S. and Canadian rights; only U.S. rights for 2001.
^dWill increase to \$160 million per year for 2003 and gradually increase to \$764 million in 2013; these amounts include rights to broadcast on television, radio, and the Internet the men's basketball tournament and other championship events, excluding football.



B. U.S. broadcast rights for the winter Olympics*



Links Between Mass Media & Sport

- ◆ Television:
 - Predominant presenter of sport
 - 1950 – less than 10%; by 2001 98% of USA households had TV's
 - By 2000 average viewer received 55 channels
 - North Americans own more than 240 million TV sets – over 1/3 of the world's total!!

Television: The Monster of the Sports World

- ◆ First TV broadcast: 1939 Basketball, Columbia v. Princeton
- ◆ At first technological limitations made TV and sport incompatible
- ◆ North American households watch TV more than 8 hours a day!
- ◆ Dominating influence in our social lives
- ◆ There is an expansion of sports coverage
- ◆ Super bowl dominates TV ratings (up to 47% of the households watching TV)
- ◆ 6 billion watched some coverage of the 2000 Olympics
- ◆ PPV is becoming more prominent

Economic Aspects of Televised Sport

- ◆ Huge economic impact of TV sport
- ◆ Money is the driving force behind the "TV-sport machine" (p. 242)

How does it work?

TV networks pay \$ for broadcast rights to show a pro or college league's games. The networks hope to get that \$ back + a profit (hey, it's a business!). They sell advertising time to corporations like GM for the games. Administrators of the sports leagues take the \$ from the networks and distributes it according to their policies. The TV industry is essentially a broker bringing together sellers (leagues) and buyers (advertisers) and consumers (fans). It is purposeful and it is with the sole intent to turn a profit! (p. 242-243)

More Examples...

- ◆ TV rights for NFL games from 1998-2006 (+ the 1997 Super Bowl) = 17.6 billion! 65% on all NFL revenue comes from TV rights
- ◆ National TV & Radio rights to MLB sold to NBC, Fox, FSN, and ESPN for 4.2 billion. Each team gets 13 million /year from contracts
- ◆ In 1999, CBS signed a broadcast contract (2003-2014) with the NCAA for 6.2 billion for D1 Men's Basketball Tourney (a 252% increase)
- ◆ A 30 second ad spot in the Super Bowl rose from \$75,000 in 1971 to \$1.9 million in 2002

Television's Influence on Sport

- ◆ Increases in Sport Revenue
 - New teams, huge profits & player salaries, many sports teams are owned BY media companies
- ◆ Indirect Business Linkages Between Media and Sport
 - Media coverage IS promotional (ESPN). Lots of Free publicity
- ◆ Popularity Shifts
 - TV boosts popularity of some sports. What sports are more TV friendly? Does the 'televise-ability' of a sport matter?
- ◆ Professional Sport Franchise locations and the Media
 - TV markets often dictate expansion and team relocation. Many sports "die" w/out coverage

Television's Influence on Sport

- ◆ Intercollegiate Sport
 - NOT amateur! Some teams seem to get more 'coverage' than others.
 - Big-time programs can't exist w/out TV. NCAA lost court decision to negotiate exclusive rights for football.
 - NCAA Tourney: More teams, more money.
 - So what? Most programs run a deficit and it would be MUCH bigger w/out TV money
 - Basketball provides 80% of the NCAA's total revenue!
 - Often, other sports (women's & men's) get shortchanged

Television's Influence on Sport

- ◆ High School Sport
 - Even high school games are increasingly televised.
 - National championships – good or bad?
 - Athletes are picking certain universities because of TV coverage

Television's Influence on Sport

◆ Modifying sport to Accommodate TV



Buffalo Sabers Rochester farm team experimenting with "blue ice."

Goaltender Ryan Miller says:
"Any kind of change would help...If they feel like people aren't able to watch or follow on TV, we should make it more television-friendly."

Television's Influence on Sport

◆ Many changes to enhance appeal or accommodate programming needs:

- NFL: Moving hash marks & kickoff spot, TV timeouts, liberalized offensive holding
- NBA: shot clock, slam dunk, three-point shot, more physical game
- Golf: match play replaces medal play, skins games
- Tennis: tie-breaker system for sets tied at 6 games all
- MLB: Designated hitter, lowered strike zone, night games for world series, livelier ball??
- Sudden death tie-breaking rules in many sports, extended play-off system
- Many Olympic events rescheduled to air in USA primetime slots

Television's Influence on Sport

◆ TV's Own Sports

Made for TV sports:

- World's Strongest Man & Woman
- Battle of the Network Stars
- Gladiators
- X-Games
- XFL...

Television's Influence on Sport

◆ Televised Sport as a Mediated Event

- Form and content altered to suit media interests
- Is the event an objective "mirror of reality"?
- Scripts, camera angles, music, stats, zoom & slow-motion, etc
- Sportscasters "hype" interest in the product but they can help to frame the reality of the event for the viewer
- Reveal and conceal becomes the "event"
- Viewers only see a particular event – carefully chosen elements
- Have to lure fans – with certain events and personalities etc
- Hook listeners or viewers – create drama!!

The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

- ◆ Increased sport in the media
 - Not just relegated to the sports page – headline news
- ◆ Sport's Privileged Treatment by Media
- ◆ Sport Consumers and the Mass Market
 - Sports sells product
 - Internet – wide-open market: gambling, fantasy leagues, helps to promote multibillion dollar industry

The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

- ◆ Reproduction of "hegemonic masculinity" in media sport
 - Sends messages about gender expectations
 - Prominent site for messages about masculinity particularly (violence, pain, sexism)
 - Sports Illustrated Covers

The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

- ◆ Media Sport and Gender Inequality
 - 40% of women participate, yet only 8% of the coverage feature women
 - Salary disparities coaches and athletes
 - Gender Bias – even broadcasters tend to diminish women's sport accomplishments (NCAA Basketball Tournament)

The Impact of Sport on the Mass Media

- ◆ Media Sport & Racial and Ethnic Inequalities:
 - History of racism and segregation in the USA – this applies to sport as well.
 - Subtle and not so subtle stereotyping often accompanies the discourse surrounding athletes of color-
 - “naturally gifted athlete” v. “field general”
 - Overwhelming focus on non-white athlete's thuggish and violent behavior yet equal time is rarely given when white athletes perpetuate similar actions
 - Native American stereotypes perpetuated via team names
 - Asian American and Latino athletes often not focused on at all or stereotyped based on ethnicity

To Conclude...

- ◆ Media and Sport have an intimate relationship based, primarily, on profit
- ◆ Sports are mediated significantly by media in order to preserve the lucrative arrangement
- ◆ Hyper critical (journalistic) voices are often silenced
- ◆ Sport journalism is still a relatively homogeneous group
- ◆ Male dominance of the “sport world” is reinforced daily through the media
- ◆ Often, “sportscaster” are not journalists at all, but rather entertainers or former athletes with no ‘news’ training – thus blurring the lines of entertainment and news

Research in Sport & Media

- ◆ Qualitative research uses several methodological frameworks.
- ◆ For Example (Plymire, 2005)
- ◆ 3 prominent “avenues of research” (p. 143):
 1. Studies of media production (few studies)
 2. Studies of audience response to media content (relatively few)
 3. Studies of media texts (majority)

Current Project:

- ◆ Masucci, M. A., & Butryn, T. M. (2007). A critical content analysis of newspaper coverage of The Ultimate Fighting Championship: 1993-2006.



Past Sport Media Projects

Doping the discourse: A critical media analysis of the centennial Tour de France

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NASSS 2003**

Purpose

- ◆ To critically examine the Outdoor Life Network's coverage of the 2003 Centennial Tour de France
- ◆ Specifically to interrogate how the OLN commentary frames the issues of doping, national identity, Lance's "drive for five"

Methodology

- ◆ Outdoor Life Network TdF coverage (@ 55 hours) taped and subjected to critical analysis (Birrell & McDonald, 2000)
 - Additional sources included Velonews, Cyclingnews, Eurosport, & L'Equipe websites
 - Researchers took notes on coverage & regularly discussed what was broadcast
 - *Quantitative data preliminary at this point*
- ◆ Coverage analyzed with three overarching thematic narratives in mind
 - In line with media's overall framing & marketing of event

Media, narrative, and the Tour de France

- ◆ Media as primary constructor & framer of the "drama"
- ◆ Evolution of American TdF coverage
- ◆ Currently, OLN is THE narrative, yet the presumption of journalistic objectivity is alluded to.
 - However, irony is that they are subject to French video feed
 - Further, ALL of the characters that frame the OLN coverage are major stakeholders!

"History", Culture, Myth and Media: The 1919 Chicago Black Sox and the Construction of American Dreams

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The Identity Wars

Media Representation of
Italian/Americans and the
Intricate Negotiation of Identity

A Presentation by: Matthew A. Masucci

From Blood Sport to Brand Name: The Turbulent History of The Ultimate Fighting Championship

1993



2006



Matthew A. Masucci & Ted M. Butryn
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**Beyond
the Octagon: The
Ascension of
Ultimate Fighting**

**Matthew A. Masucci
San José State University**